

AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLEGES AND DOCTORS.

It has long been known that there are few among the medical colleges of this country whose diplomas are recognized in Europe, although many American physicians have obtained international reputations for their skill and learning. The reason for this high appreciation of individuals and apparent disrespect for the institutions from which some of them may have been graduated requires some attention. Is it a deliberate affront to our medical colleges, asks the *New York Sun*, or do they actually merit such reproach?

Critics have intimated that there are striking defects in our system of medical education which would not be tolerated under any other government in the world. Among them are the lack of stringent requirements for preliminary education, deficiency in hospital facilities for students, the shortness of the time spent in actual preparation, and the insufficiency of the final examination which tests the qualification of a man for the degree of doctor. While these criticisms are no doubt perfectly true of the majority of the schools, there are, fortunately, several whose standards are as high as

THOSE OF ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

But while we acknowledge the existence of these honorable exceptions, we must believe that the strictures upon the system are in the main just, and the obvious explanation of the origin of these fundamental defects must lie in the ease with which charters for such colleges are obtained and in the selfish ambitions of physicians. It has been possible for any group of six or eight practitioners in a city or in a country town, desirous of obtaining the titles of professors and of acquiring a consulting practice in the neighborhood, to organize themselves into a medical faculty and to engineer a charter through the Legislature empowering them to confer degrees with license to practice. The charter is easily secured, and without any sort of guarantee that the proposed teachers possess the rudiments of education or have any hospital connection, or, in fact, any facilities whatever for giving proper instruction. With a charter, they open a college wherever they are able to afford the rent of a few rooms or a house and to pay for the printing of the magnificent prospectus, or the annual announcement, which, after all, is the most important thing. If the self-made professors forming the stock company were poor in this world's goods, the institution enjoyed but a flickering existence, sometimes dying out early, sometimes being resuscitated, but sure

FINALLY OF BECOMING EXTINCT.

If successfully established by the sheer persistence of the faculty, the jealousy of other practitioners in the town soon leads to the creation of one or several rival corporations upon a similar footing. As soon as one branch of the profession gets a college, then the homeopaths, the eclectics, and the like, and finally the women also, determine to enjoy the same inestimable privilege; and thus medical colleges have become preternaturally numerous. In this way Cleveland, Minneapolis, Denver and Nashville each have three, Atlanta four, Louisville five, Baltimore six and Cincinnati seven medical colleges. We fear St. Louis will know a bitter pang when she learns that

CHICAGO IS THE HAPPY POSSESSOR

of eight of these precious institutions of learning, whereas she has but seven.

Altogether there are 135 medical colleges in the United States, and from them between four and five thousand young medicals are graduated every spring to recruit a profession which might perhaps otherwise suffer extinction.

By making a little comparison with other countries we find that where, as in the United States, there is one institution able to confer medical degrees to about every 600,000 of inhabitants, Germany has one for every 2,000,000, Great Britain one for every 3,000,000, Austro-Hungary one for every 5,500,000, and France one for every 6,300,000. One would imagine that we must be a singularly afflicted people to require so much professional care, but investigation proves that no other nation

IS HEALTHIER THAN OURS.

We are, therefore, led to justify our right to the possession of so many medical colleges by presenting the fact of our enormous superiority in expanse of territory as compared with other nations, and we may be allowed the little pleasantry of suggesting that it is both just and proper to estimate the relative number of medical colleges by their relation to acres of area. It certainly can not be the demand of a suffering population, or why should Pennsylvania, with just double the number of inhabitants, be content with but six medical faculties, while Missouri has fourteen? But the area of Pennsylvania is roughly 5,000 square miles, while that of Missouri is 69,000, and this gives us a probable clew to the increase as we go westward. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire have together about the same population as Ohio, but they have altogether only six medical colleges, while Ohio rejoices in fifteen! But Ohio has nearly 10,000 square miles more of area than these four States taken together. So it may be that there is something in the relative proportion of medical institutions to acres after all. If this be true, we would suggest Alaska as being particularly well adapted for our surplus medical colleges, since at least 100 out of the 135 could readily be spared to make glad the hearts of the

INHABITANTS OF THAT REMOTE LAND.

There are some who argue that the East is becoming effete, that even culture is leaving our boundaries to take up its permanent abode in the West, and no doubt they will welcome any fact which may lend a support to their theory. Thus New York, Boston and Philadelphia have fifteen medical colleges, but the new seats of culture, Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis, have twenty-two!

Is there no remedy for this evil? Yes; fortunately the doctrine of the self-limitation of fevers and fermentation is applicable, for it is in the nature of things that parasites of all kinds should finally be compelled to give up their existence when their pabulum is exhausted. The faculties grow tired when there are no students to pay rent, printing and salaries, and we are glad to quote the splendid report for this year of the Illinois State Board of Health upon the medical colleges of the world, to the effect that since 1850 these institutions in the United States have been dying off at the rate of three a year. Oh, for some deadly virus

TO INCREASE THAT MORTALITY.

We are assured by this Illinois report of steady improvement in the colleges that remain. Most of them are extending their curriculum to three years of six months each, in the place of two years of four months each, which was formerly the common requirement. The opportunities for gaining experience in diagnosis and treatment through hospital

study before beginning practice upon an unsuspecting public are very much greater than before. A fact of still more importance is that some preliminary education is now considered as essential to the study of medicine; and entrance examinations are required in 129 medical colleges in the United States and Canada. It is a pleasure to learn that two graduates are now studying reading, writing and arithmetic on probation for a license to practice in Illinois. So not only the young men on the threshold of professional life, but the older men who have passed through the doors, are influenced favorably by

THE NEW DEMANDS OF PROGRESS.

By far the most important step in advancing medical education in this country is the establishment of examining licensing boards by the various States, such as are doing good service in Alabama, Minnesota, New Jersey, North and South Carolina, and Illinois. After September, 1891, such examinations will also be held in New York. Since no one can practice medicine in these States without securing a license by examination, it will not matter how many medical colleges there are; but there will probably result a generous rivalry among existing institutions to teach better, afford better facilities, require a higher standard of preliminary education, and to gain a reputation founded upon the intellectual victories of their students.

Facts About Medical Colleges.

Editorial in Chicago Evening Journal, February 28, 1891.

In another column of this paper will be found an interesting article on the subject of medical colleges and diplomas of graduates from medical institutions, or those alleged to be such. The country needs protection from the swarms of quacks that are turned out by so-styled medical colleges, which are merely diploma mills, and exist, not to educate a class of accomplished and trustworthy physicians fit to practice medicine in all departments, but merely to gather revenue from selling their diplomas to anybody who will pay for them.

That medical students should have a thorough preparatory education for the discipline of the mental faculties, and that they may be well grounded in general science as the best foundation for medical knowledge, and that no person should graduate in the medical schools who is not thoroughly fitted and worthy to receive a diploma, are admitted facts. That to elevate medical education and the medical profession is the real cause, not of the doctors, but of the people to whose ills the doctors minister, is a fact. It is less in the interest of science than of the public, where quacks and adventurers find their victims, that the advocates of a better system for licensing medical practitioners have devoted their labors, and that the American Academy of Medicine has been instituted.

Each State should provide for a thorough examination of every applicant for a medical license, whether coming with a diploma or without one, and no applicant should be licensed to practice unless he is proved to be thoroughly competent and thoroughly honest. With such a system thoroughly enforced in all the States the day of pretenders and empirics would soon pass away.

